



EUROPEAN UNION

26th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Bratislava

5 December 2019

EU Opening Statement

Ministers, Dear Friends,

I would like to start by extending warm thanks to the Slovak Chairperson-in-Office, my friend Miroslav Lajcak, and his team for the excellent work done throughout this year and extend my best wishes to the incoming Albanian CiO. I also thank Sweden and Poland for putting forward their candidature for Chairmanships in 2021 and 2022.

This being my first international conference after taking office, I wish to assure you of my eagerness to work closely with all of you, with honesty and determination, to ensure our European continent develops into a pillar for peace, prosperity and justice for the rest of the world.

This Bratislava Ministerial must help advance in this direction, across all OSCE Dimensions, with deliverables that represent real added value for the Organisation.

This year's developments have amply confirmed the need to restore respect for OSCE principles and commitments (Helsinki Final Act, Paris Charter). Safeguarding territorial integrity and mutual respect remain our guiding principles as relevant as ever. The EU is ready to actively support the OSCE's efforts, as part of our unwavering commitment to a multilateral rules-based order and to the European security architecture.



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I welcome the recent positive developments in Ukraine. The upcoming Normandy Four summit brings hope for improved and hopefully result-oriented increased dialogue. At the same time, the core of the conflict remains: Russia's violations of international law and OSCE principles through illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and aggression in eastern Ukraine.

The work of the Special Monitoring Mission, to which EU Member States contribute more than two thirds in personnel and budget, is invaluable and it must enjoy full, safe, unconditional and unhindered access throughout Ukraine in accordance with its mandate. Humanitarian access and protection for the civilian population and critical infrastructure must also be ensured.

In today's challenging world, the protracted conflicts in our area – whether in Georgia, Moldova or Nagorno-Karabakh – can be resolved only if participating States agree to solve them in line with the OSCE principles. We should be prepared to work on these challenges in whatever format offers the best prospect for peace. Indeed, stability in the OSCE area is a strategic priority for the European Union. We will continue to mobilise our instruments and policies towards achieving this goal. In the Western Balkans, the EU perspective is the pillar for reform, modernisation and stability of the region. This year, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership and we will continue to advance our joint work. When it comes to our partners in Central Asia, we adopted in June 2019 the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, which provides us with a policy framework for an ambitious and mutually beneficial partnership.

Together with its Member States, the European Union continues to believe that it is vital to modernise our OSCE politico-military toolbox, most notably the Vienna Document, in order to increase military stability, transparency and predictability.



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The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, highlights the vital role of the human dimension, and in particular the importance of respect for fundamental freedoms, for our common security. The backsliding on human rights, the restrictions imposed on fundamental freedoms, the reduced space for civil society and the growing intolerance in the OSCE area need to be addressed urgently. We fully support the autonomous institutions and the OSCE field presences, from the Western Balkans to Central Asia, play a crucial role in ensuring the implementation of the OSCE commitments.

Mr Chairman, dear friends, The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organisation. It provides us with a unique platform for dialogue and normative framework. Its conflict resolution and confidence building mechanisms make important contributions to preventing crises, resolving protracted conflicts, strengthening peace and development and combating transnational threats. The values, principles and commitments to which we have all subscribed constitute the foundation stones of security and political stability in the OSCE area and remain fully valid today. Respect for them must be restored and they must be implemented by all in good faith. You can rest assured that the EU will continue to actively play its part.

Thank you.